

Museum: ‘I just loved to collect flint’

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to do Chief Joseph as the person he was. He did not like killing people. He was a peaceful Indian chief. He was a friend to all the other chiefs and also was a very good friend of Gen. (Oliver Otis) Howard, even during the battle.”

Howard was the U.S. Army general who led the troops chasing the Nez Perce during their flight toward Canada during the Nez Perce War of 1877.

David Manuel went on to explain the action in the piece, showing Joseph counting coup on a downed Crow warrior.

“I wanted to depict Chief Joseph as an Indian who was not out to kill another Indian. That’s why he has a coup stick,” he said. “A coup stick was a decorated staff that when an Indian catches an enemy with it, the enemy automatically gives up. The Indian with the coup stick can add another feather to his warbonnet. What he’s doing here is getting ready to touch a Crow Indian who’s fallen off his horse.”

The Crow is depicted as a mighty warrior with a resplendent warbonnet made of prized wing feathers — such is the detail Manuel is able to achieve. By counting coup on the Crow, Joseph will have the right to take the Crow’s warbonnet. The Crow will lose his status as a warrior and be a disgrace to his people.

“Joseph knows this,” Manuel said. “He’s going to take this warbonnet home as a trophy. That’s how the Nez Perce started wearing warbonnets.”

Joseph also knows that the Crow, who’s life has been spared, can retrieve his warbonnet in a friendly trade and the Crow can regain his honor among his tribe, Manuel said.

Manuel thoroughly researches the people and animals depicted in his works, right down to the style of saddles and the decorations on a turtle shell depicted in one piece.

The self-taught artist also described another piece he’s working on called “Gentle and Furious,” showing a cougar threatening a colt with the mare kicking at the cat. It’s typical of Manuel’s pieces in the action it shows.

“I like to do action,” he said. “The only art schooling I got was from a high school art teacher ... he told me I could do action well.”

Manuel attributed that ability to his love of Charlie Russell’s bronzes and paintings of the Old West.

“I always wanted to do as good as Charlie Russell,” Manuel said.

He said his high school teacher tried to discourage him from trying to make a living as an artist, saying, “You’ll never have a steak on your plate,” since too many people were trying to be artists.

Then he started winning numerous awards at national art shows.



David Manuel tells of the “arrowhead fever” that got him started collecting historic artifacts as a child. The arrowheads are part of the displays at Manuel History Bronze museum in Enterprise, where a preview was held Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2020.



This bronze sculpture of Nez Perce Chief Joseph done by David Manuel is one of many on display at the Manuel History Bronze museum in Enterprise. A preview of the museum was held Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2020.

“He came up to me and said, ‘Dave, if it wasn’t for me, you wouldn’t be where you are right now.’ He did give me good advice when he said to do action,” Manuel said.

He also plans another locally themed piece in a painting he’s just started work on. It’ll be called “Returning Spirit,” depicting Chief Joseph returning to his beloved Wallowa Valley from where he was forced to move.

“It takes me forever to do a painting, but we’re going to make prints of it,” David Manuel said.

Lee Manuel said they expect to have prints available when they hold a grand opening next year.

“That is the piece we’re going to be opening with in 2021,” Lee Manuel said.

In addition to David Manuel’s bronzes and paintings, the museum contains paintings and bronze works by others — including foundry

owner Timothy Parks.

But most of the museum holds historic artifacts. As David Manuel directed, a visitor can start where artifacts of mountain men begin, progress to the Oregon Trail and early Western settlers, and find massive amounts of Indian artifacts, including clothing from a Nez Perce display and from Yellow Wolf’s family. Yellow Wolf was a warrior with Chief Joseph during the Nez Perce War who later provided historians with the tribe’s perspective on the war.

He said he’s done his best to maintain a high standard of ethics when obtaining artifacts. Of the Yellow Wolf collection, he said, he purchased the items and made sure Yellow Wolf’s descendants were able to share in the proceeds.

The Manuels also have a massive collection of arrowheads, which were what got David Manuel started as a child.

“I just loved to collect flint,” the 80-year-old said. “I’d take a coffee can full of flint and throw it out on the floor and find a broken arrowhead. That gave me the fever. I call it ‘arrow fever.’ When you find one, then you want to find two and so on. You just want to find more.”

He also makes sure he doesn’t take arrowheads illicitly.

“I’ve turned a lot of arrowheads down if it appears they may have come from near a burial ground,” he said.

The museum also contains massive collections of military memorabilia, including uniforms, flags, photographs, firearms, other weaponry, accoutrements — even still-sealed rations from all of America’s wars since the Civil War.

Lee Manuel thanked the nearly 70 people invited who came to the Oct. 13 preview.

“Everybody’s been just so amazing,” she said. “We hope you’ll continue to be business partners with us.”

Schools: ‘We did intervene during the shutdown’

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the kids, you know the families and you have a relationship with them.”

The teacher retention rate — it was 86% and 72% for Wallowa Elementary and Wallowa High, respectively — also play an important role, Jones said.

“Getting staff to stay, administrators to stay, for a long time is important,” she said. “If we’re looking for how do we improve our culture to ensure all students are learning at high levels, the more we’re together and we can learn and grow as a staff, the better the kids will do.”

Joseph’s graduation rate not only was perfect, but JCS reported a high teacher-retention rate of 95%.

Enterprise was at the same level when it came to keeping teachers, with EHS having a retention rate of 95% and the elementary school a touch higher at 96%.

Enterprise School Dis-

trict Superintendent Erika Pinkerton was pleased with overall performance the report showed.

“We were at 90%, (and) we continue to maintain that, which is exceptional,” she said.

Pinkerton explained that while the overall rate did drop, in a smaller school district a single student can sway the results.

“When you’re working with such a small cohort, one student will alter your outcome, and in that case, (the) 7% (difference) was one student,” she said.

Pinkerton noted that due to the COVID-19 shutdowns in March, there were no statewide assessments that typically would have been included in the data.

She also commended the staff for how it performed in spite of the shutdown.

“Our high school teachers did an excellent job at reaching out to students who were not on track,” she said. “We did intervene during the shutdown.”

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